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ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes a reading program that was designed and implemented to help improve reading attitudes among fifth grade children. A target group of 17 fifth-graders were unmotivated and uninterested in reading, and TV occupied a great deal of their out-of-class time. Solution strategies involved encouraging parents, teachers, and media specialists to provide interesting reading materials for the children, to model a love for reading, and to read aloud to them. The Accelerated Reader Program was used to motivate students. After reading certain books students took a computerized test and earned points, based on correct answers, which could be cashed in for prizes. Spin-off activities involved students keeping a daily log, read-aloud sessions, poster contests, and daily sustained silent reading periods. Success was measured by comparing a pre- and post-TV survey to determine students' attitudes toward reading, and also by using assessment instruments including students' daily logs, reading goals, media specialists' checkout log, flexible checkout schedule survey, sustained silent reading observation survey, student questionnaires, and student improvement on tests. Results showed no major reduction in students' TV viewing time. However, it was evident from students' enthusiasm for going to the media center to check out books, and their excitement over the Accelerated Reader Program, that attitudes toward reading improved and students did read more. (Six tables of data are included; 20 references and 12 appendixes, containing surveys, questionnaires, forms, and data are attached.) (Author/SR)

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Using the Accelerated Reader and Other
Strategies and Varied Techniques to Improve
the Reading Attitudes of Fifth Grade Students

by

Deloris McKnight

Cluster 41

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A Practicum I Report presented to
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

Using the Accelerated Reader and Other Strategies and Varied Techniques to Improve the Reading Attitudes of Fifth Grade Students.

McKnight, Deloris H., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D., Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Reading Behavior/Reading Incentive Programs/Daily Logging/Leisure Time Reading/TV Viewing and Reading/Reading Aloud Influence/Sustained Silent Reading/Reading Attitudes Parents/Teachers/

This practicum describes a reading program that was designed and implemented by the writer to help improve reading attitudes. A target group of 17 fifth grade students were unmotivated and disinterested in reading. TV viewing occupied a great deal of the student's out of class time. Students received limited motivation to engage in more recreational and independent reading. The major goals were for students to read more, read better books, and read for pleasure.

This program contained basic solution strategies for improving attitudes toward leisure time reading. The strategies involved encouraging parents, teachers, and media specialists to provide interesting reading materials for children. Also, parents, older siblings, teachers, and media specialists were encouraged to model a love for reading and read aloud to children. The Accelerated Reader Program was used to help students become motivated and interested in reading. They took a computerized test after reading certain books and points were earned based on correct answers. These points could be cashed in for prizes. Spin off activities involved students keeping a daily log, read aloud sessions conducted by parents, older peers, teachers and other adults, poster contests, and daily sustained silent reading periods.

The writer measured success by comparing the pre and post TV survey to determine students' attitudes toward reading. The writer also used assessment instruments, which included a student's daily log, student's reading goals, media specialist's checkout log, flexible checkout schedule survey, sustained silent reading observation survey, student's questionnaire of activities he/she enjoys doing, and student's improvement on tests. There was no major reduction in students' TV viewing time; however, it was evident from the enthusiasm to go to the media center to check out books to read and excitement over the Accelerated Reader Program that attitudes toward reading improved and students did read more.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting for the writer was a large elementary school with an enrollment of 800 students. The population involved in this practicum study was 17 fifth graders who attended Chapter I compensatory classes.

The school was one of 13 elementary schools located in the School District. The community was a mixture of middle class population and lower socio-economic population. 65% of the parents held blue collar jobs, 30% held white collar jobs, 2% were lawyers, doctors, or successful business persons, and 3% were unemployed or received some type of government assistance. The community was supportive of the school as many parents volunteered their services as well as financial support. There was a strong "Association of Parents and Teachers" (APT) which sponsored activities that helped promote the school's educational program.

All students in grades 1-6 were invited to participate in "Book It." "Book It" was a national reading incentive program for children in elementary grades to encourage reading.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is presently serving as guidance counselor in her work setting. The writer's educational background includes earning a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Social Studies, a Master of Education degree in Education, and an Educational Specialist degree with a concentration in administration and guidance. The writer's work experience includes serving as an elementary and secondary social studies teacher, holding positions of media specialist on the elementary and middle school level, and serving as guidance counselor on the elementary level, which makes a total of 26 years in the public school system. The writer is actively involved in professional organizations and holds membership in the SCEA (South Carolina Educational Association), NEA (National Educational Association, and the Florence County Education Association. The writer also holds membership in the South Carolina Association of School Librarians and the South Carolina Association of School Counselors.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Some fifth grade students were unmotivated and disinterested in reading. Emphasis on recreational and independent reading was not always given top priority in the classroom or students' homes; movie and television viewing occupied a great deal of the students' out of class time. Students received limited motivation to engage in more recreational and independent reading.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of this problem was supported by observation, interview, surveys, questionnaires, students' academic performance, and test results.

During the fall of 1991, a weekly circulation log and interview with students revealed that only two students out of 17 checked out books for purposes other than to complete a required assignment. (see Table 1)

The results of a survey completed in the fall of 1991 showed that only one student utilized the flexible checkout schedule, 30 minutes before school and 30 minutes at the end of the school day, to check out books for leisure reading. (see Table 2)

TABLE 1

Summary Results of the Total
Number of Students Checking Out Books

	<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 2</u>	<u>Day 3</u>	<u>Day 4</u>	<u>Day 5</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assignment	5	3	2	3	2	15
Leisure Reading	0	1	0	0	0	1
How to Books	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total Number of Students	6	4	2	3	2	17

TABLE 2

Results of Survey Showing Students
Who Used the Flexible Checkout Schedule

Students Using the Morning Checkout Schedule	Students Using the Afternoon Checkout Schedule	Number of Students Not Using Flexible Checkout Schedule Morning or Afternoon	Total
1	0	16	17

During fall 1991, 15 of 17 students responded negatively when interviewed with the following two questions: (1) Do you ever see your parents read? (2) Do you like to be read to by your parents and teachers? (see Table 3)

For four weeks during the fall of 1991, the writer observed 15 minutes of sustained silent reading in the classroom. 15 of the 17 students exhibited inconsistent reading habits and regularly became behavior problems, displaying such behavior as squirming, taking objects out to tap on the desk, daydreaming, etc. (see Table 4)

Questionnaires completed by 17 of the students indicated reading to rate eighth on a scale of 1-8 as the favorite thing to do in spare time with one being the most favorite thing to do and 8 being the least favorite thing to do. Watching TV rated first choice, playing video games was second choice, playing sports rated third choice, etc. (see Table 5)

During an interview with language arts teachers, it was revealed that 12 students out of 17 performed poorly in subject matter and on tests that required content or extensive reading. (see Table 6)

Causative Analysis

It is the writer's belief that there were six causes for the problem. Children were inundated with so many

TABLE 3

Summary Results of Students' Interview Questions

Question	Yes	No	Total
1. Do you ever see your parents read?	2	15	17
2. Do you like to be read to by your parents or teachers?	2	15	17

TABLE 4

Summary Results of Sustained Silent Reading
Observation Survey

Activity	Number of Students
Selected Reading Materials When Instructed To Do So by the Teacher	17
Began Reading When Instructed To Do So by the Teacher	2
Stayed in Seat and On Task, Left Toys and and Other Objects Inside the Desk	2
Exhibited Inconsistent Reading Habits or Became Behavior Problems	15

TABLE 5

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Activities Enjoy Doing

* NOTE: Seventeen students participated in this student survey.

DIRECTIONS: FROM A SCALE 1-8, RATE THE ACTIVITY YOU MOST ENJOY DOING.

- 8 - Activity least enjoy doing
7
6
5
4
3
2
1 - Activity most enjoy doing

ACTIVITY	RATING
Watch television	1
Read books for pleasure	8
Talk with friends on the telephone	2
Play sports	4
Listen to music	5
Play the nintendo	3
Walk in the woods	6
Go to the mall	7

Most favorite activity: Watch television

Least favorite activity: Read books

TABLE 6
Results of Language Arts Teachers
Interview Questions

Number of Teachers Reporting	Test Performance Objective Test			Test Performance Subject Matter and Content Test Requiring Extensive Reading		
	Good	Fair	Poor	Good	Fair	Poor
4	12	5	0	1	4	12

distractions (television, radio, video games) in the home that reading was not given priority. Children had not been motivated or sold on the joy of reading or the desire to want to read. Children did not have role models in the home promoting reading as a pleasurable experience. The current state mandated curriculum and time constraints allowed minimal time for the classroom teacher to encourage individual lifetime reading interests or extensive leisure time reading. These students had histories of reading failure thus resulting in negative attitudes toward reading.

In this school setting, children showed a dislike for sustained reading. They often daydreamed or misbehaved. Several children verbalized a desire to watch TV instead of having sustained silent reading.

Many times the children's reading interests had not been taken into consideration when books for the classroom library were purchased.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Review of the literature gave evidence that people are social creatures, and reading is a social experience. An essential ingredient is that other persons are involved in reading. Without others, there would be no need for language, be it speaking, writing, or reading.

Manna (1987) stresses "enthusiasm for reading is caught, not taught." Manna (1987) feels that parents and

teachers should be role models and set examples for children to emulate.

Instead of parents demonstrating positive attitudes toward reading, they often used TV as a babysitter. Trelease (1984) questions how many would hire a sitter who models violence as a way of solving problems. Trelease (1984) further stresses that what TV does offer is a steady stream of entertainment based on daily social and business values that would qualify most people for prison terms (p. 119).

It is a fact that children spend more time in front of the TV than in front of parents or teachers (Trelease, 1984). It is obvious that the challenge is to negotiate and plan strategies to make TV work for children instead of against them. One strategy might be to set limits and put controls on TV viewing. Another strategy might be to monitor programs and tune into educational TV programs, talk about them, and seize teachable moments to help enrich the child's learning experiences.

Anderson and Freebody (1983) note that other literature gives evidence that children who are not read to tend to get lost in the educational cracks to resurface later and be labeled slow learners.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1987) reports that children who read well have parents who read aloud to them, take them places, talk to them

about their experiences, and take interest in their reading progress.

Anderson (1983) discussed the importance of the parents' role in the child's continued reading growth and urged parents to continue to encourage leisure time reading and to read and discuss stories with the child. Trelease (1984) shares the experience of a mother of a dyslexic child who began reading to the child after reading the write-up in the Read-Aloud Handbook about the importance of reading to children. When the dyslexic problem surfaced years later, the child's teacher noted that his comprehension skills were at the top of the class in spite of the reading handicap (p. 24).

The parent's reading helped the child to develop the necessary learning comprehension skills to master the school work. He also had an incentive to deal with the dyslexic problem.

Smith (1988) reports that parents make an impact on their child's mind. It is important for the child to see the parent read. They often want to imitate their parent. This point is stressed to the child's parents in the school setting. Greaney (1987) feels that what parents "do" is more important than material things which might be provided. The type of reading habits is indicative of the home environment. These points are highlighted during

parent orientation and stressed throughout the school year in the school setting.

Reading may often be a frustrating and difficult task; therefore, children's expectations may not be met. Reading may fail to meet some children's inner needs.

Rasinski (1988) stated:

Reading educators need to be concerned about aliteracy as they are about illiteracy...Aliteracy begins when the ultimate goals of reading (i.e., the reading attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of "good" adult readers) are not reflected in the reading instruction and desired reading behaviors that are part of the school reading curriculum (p. 85).

So often the school curriculum is so demanding with skills to be covered and pages to be completed that little time is allowed for sustained silent reading or reading for pleasure. When an overload of skills is taught, students will often turn off and tune out the written page.

Cicccone (1981) adamantly stresses that reading is not for school only. The Neilsen study, as cited by Cicccone, points out the importance of the home environment and highlighted the driving force this environment has on the child's attitude toward reading

Ciccone (1981) did a study in which students record their reading materials on a daily log sheet. Included were how many minutes were spent on reading, homework, watching TV and hobbies. The study revealed over a nine week period of time girls read more books, approximately 24, and boys read approximately 17. The study revealed that students selected and enjoyed reading books based on their interest.

Goodlad (1984) points out overt displays of feeling are rarities in the classroom. Movement is often inhibited in the classroom. Goodlad (1984) further states, "The early years of schooling appear to me to be shockingly devoid of fairy tales, with their extraordinary ability to symbolize through dragons, heroes, and caring for another the challenges, problems, and opportunities life presents" (p. 243).

Literature reveals several causes for the problem. Dionisio (1989) reports that to many children reading is an empty pocket with no meaning or purpose. After years of remedial instruction, hundreds of skill drill exercises, myriads of diagnostic tests and still their pockets are empty, their reading is meaningless and progressively stripped not only of sense but of enjoyment as well.

Trelease (1984) reports the distraction in the home environment is eminent. Ninety-eight percent of the homes in America have a Television set or other electronic games. (The average home contains 2.3 sets.) That television is on for an average of seven hours and one minute a day (p. 4).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

"The following goals and expected outcomes were projected for this practicum."

Expected Outcomes

Some of the changes expected are as follows:

1. Ten children out of 17 keep a daily log of their reading activities recording the time spent reading and the number of pages read.
(see Appendix A)
2. Ten children out of 17 will reduce commercial television viewing time to one-half the time spent before engaging in the reading project.
(see Appendix B)
3. Ten children out of 17 will set reading goals and adhere to them. (see Appendix C)
4. Ten children out of 17 will indicate that they checked out books from the media center and read for pleasure. (see Appendix D)
5. A survey will indicate that ten children out of 17 use the media center at least twice a week to check out books for pleasure reading.
(see Appendix E)

6. Ten students out of 17 will respond positively when asked if they ever see their parents read or if they like to be read to by their parents or teachers. (see Appendix F)
7. Ten students out of 17 will exhibit good behavior while engaging in sustained silent reading for 20 minutes per day. (see Appendix G)
8. Seven students out of 17 will rate reading as at least the second favorite thing to do in spare time. (see Appendix H)
9. Language arts teachers will report nine students out of 17 earned at least a B on a test that required content on extensive reading. (See Appendix I)
10. Ten children out of 17 will complete a reading survey with eight out of ten positive responses. (see Appendix J)

Measurement of Outcomes

1. The instrument to ascertain if students were reading daily was to be a daily log kept by the students. Each daily log would contain a line for the student's name and homeroom teacher. Space for recording the date, title of material, pages read and time spent reading was provided on the sheet. Also included was a line for the parent's signature and the teacher's

signature to verify the student had spent the amount of time reported actually reading. The parent, teacher, or writer was to initial to the left of the date daily to verify that the child had read.

2. A student TV pre-survey was to be given to the students in the fall of 1991. A student TV post-survey was to be given to students upon completion of the project. The survey contained a line for the student's name and the teacher's name. Eight questions were listed. These questions were related to students' reading habits and TV watching habits. The possible responses were yes, sometimes, and no. Two questions relating to the amount of time students watched TV were included on the survey. Students could circle the response most closely related to their reading time or fill in a time not listed. The survey was simple and non-threatening. The survey took approximately 12 minutes to complete. The survey results were to be recorded on a chart.
3. Separate lines for the name, grade and date preface the reading goal form. The phrase "My reading goal is ..." appeared next on the form; space was provided for the student to record his/her reading goal. Following the goal statement, space was provided for the student to record how he/she planned to meet the goal. Students were requested to respond to the

question "Was the goal met?" and discuss the reason why or why not. This type of response request would challenge the student to do critical thinking.

4. A student checkout log was to be kept by the student. A space was provided for the date and name of the school. Three columns were listed to indicate why students checked out books. The students made a mark under the column to indicate the reason. The media specialist was to maintain a daily checkout log. The log was to contain the same information as the individual student's checkout log. Students were also to be interviewed informally. They were to be asked the reasons for checking out a particular book. The media specialist's log was to be checked to determine the amount and types of books children read. By keeping a daily log, students could confront themselves and ascertain if they were spending as much time as possible reading and enjoying it. The log would help the writer provide reading guidance for the children.
5. The flexible checkout schedule survey was user friendly. The student was to be given an opportunity to circle the statements that refer to him/her. If the flexible checkout schedule was not used, the student would be requested to explain why.

6. The student interview questions were very brief. A simple "yes" or "no" response was to be given. Each question was followed by a request to please give the reason why. The "why" response could lead into an open-ended discussion.
7. The teacher or writer was to observe the students. The sustained silent reading observation survey was user friendly as a "+" or "-" would indicate behavior as perceived by the observer. A number would to be assigned to each student to accommodate the recording process.
8. This questionnaire was to be based on a scale from 1-8. "1" indicated the activity the student most enjoyed doing, and "8" was the activity the student least enjoyed doing.
9. Language Arts teachers interview questions were very direct. There were only two questions in this instrument. The questions were to be answered orally. Teachers were asked to use the performance scale on the sheet to indicate the student's performance. A tally mark was to be made for each individual student. When all students' scores were reported, these marks were to be totaled.
10. The reading survey was to be an instrument designed to assess the student's reading habits and interest. This instrument contained 10 questions. The

questions were written in a language that students could understand. The approximate time necessary for a fifth grade student to complete the survey was from 12 to 15 minutes.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Some fifth grade students were unmotivated and disinterested in reading. Greaney (1986) reports on the importance of the parent and child interacting. Parents need to interact frequently and in a qualitative manner. Children who have this kind of environment tend to develop linguistic and cognitive skills that are important to reading.

Shanahan and Hogan (1983) cited the importance of adults or older siblings interacting verbally with the child. Children who receive this type of mental stimulus tend to acquire important competencies.

Heathington and Alexander (1983) point out that studies have shown preschool children start out with positive attitudes, but over time their attitudes change because of limited reading reinforcement by the teacher and parents. Heathington and Alexander (1983) further state the change in students' negative reading attitudes may be that primary grade teachers spend little class time attempting to develop positive attitudes toward reading.

Good readers tend to be more interested in reading; Juel (1988) also points out this fact. The idea is to get children to become interested in reading. Applebee and

Mullis (1988) reported poor readers spend less time than good readers reading independently in and out of school, but if provided with material they find interesting, unmotivated readers may develop an interest in and a favorable attitude toward reading. Juel (1988) declares that good readers are apt to be more interested in reading because they find it an easy, enjoyable task.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

All the solutions discussed and combined would by no means be considered a panacea to motivate children to read. However, considered individually, each has some merit. Surely children who are exposed to a rich variety of experiences tend to be more alert and attentive when read to. This attention carries over when children enter school and interact formally with the printed word from the first action and play activities to sight and word recognition to more advanced reading skills.

In the writer's work setting, a variety of solutions are emphasized. Parents are invited to become partners with the schools to encourage reading achievement and good reading habits. Children are provided with a variety of learning experiences which would involve interacting with the printed word; these include activities such as writing a short story and role playing the parts. By the time students reach intermediate school, the reading habits and patterns are usually set; therefore, realizing the

challenge, it is important to devise schemes and strategies to motivate students to replace negative reading attitudes with positive attitudes. Positive reinforcement was utilized with children. Incentives to read were issued to the children. As the children engaged in reading activities, the writer offered reading guidance and served somewhat like a ship captain to navigate children into a broader horizon of reading adventure. The writer worked closely with the language arts teacher. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were conducted under the leadership of the writer.

The principal of the school was consulted for permission to conduct the practicum. The Accelerated Reader books were available in the school media center. The school media specialist was consulted, and she pledged to assist with making available necessary books and use of the media center's facilities whenever feasible.

Report of Action TakenWeek 1

Implementation of the practicum was a challenge for the writer and others involved. In a previous meeting the practicum project was discussed with the principal. With the proper permission granted, the media specialist was later consulted. The media specialist's facial expression and other body language showed her vivacity for the project. She pledged her support. The language arts teachers were just as supportive.

The Accelerated Reader Program was explained to the students during the first week. The writer explained that the purpose of the Accelerated Reader Program was to help students become motivated and interested in reading. Students selected books from an extensive list and read them. After the book had been read, a test was taken by using a computer software program. Students earned points based on the number of questions answered correctly. The points were used to purchase prizes. (See Appendix L) The students were motivated when the incentives were explained and asked questions about exactly what they had to do to earn the points to be traded in. The writer explained that there was an Accelerated Reader's shopping store open every Friday. The students earned coupons for points, and the coupons were used to purchase "goodies" from the store.

The students completed a reading survey. This instrument surveyed students' attitudes toward reading.

The writer directed a morning broadcast. Students presented school news and reading information. Students sometimes gave two minute talks about books they had read. The morning program was completed with the theme "The more you read, the more you know; the more you know, the farther you go!" During class, a books news hot line was used to inform students of new and interesting books appropriate for their age group.

Parents received written correspondence concerning the Accelerated Reader. The program was explained in detail. Six of the parents called the writer to ask questions related to the Accelerated Reader Program. All six pledged their support to the program.

Week 2

The students role played parts of interesting stories. Some of these stories were taped with the camcorder and played back for the class to view. Paul Bunyan, John Henry and Pecos Bill were the favorite stories role played out.

The writer phoned or contacted the parents to explain the program and solicited their support and to follow through on the read aloud activities. Most parents said they would cooperate and read to their children. Some reminded the writer they worked and were tired when they

arrived home, but they would do what they could. Two parents could not read but indicated that they would have an older sibling read to the children.

Teachers were informed about the Accelerated Reader Program during an inservice.

A list of Accelerated Reader books were distributed. Some students complained that they had never heard of the titles or stated that they looked too hard. The writer reassured the students that the books would be on their reading level and went with them to the media center to browse.

When the students saw the section labeled "Accelerated Reader Books" and browsed around, most of the restive attitudes over the list disappeared. The students expressed liking the books, and they seemed like fun to read. Books were checked out during the visit.

The daily log assignment was made. The students helped design the daily log form. They were given an opportunity to express their feelings about a daily log.

The writer introduced the computer operation to the students. Groups of two received instructions and practiced using the computer. They seemed very excited and begged for more time to practice.

Week 3

A reading chart was made listing all seventeen of the students' names. Different colored "smiling faces" were

used to indicate the number of points earned by the students.

Students read the shorter, interesting books first. They began taking reading tests on the computer. All students met with some success and earned points by the third week.

The writer introduced students to different ways to make reading buttons. Round patterns were cut out from construction paper, felt, and brown paper bags. The writer provided the materials and supplies. Students designed their own button. Some used story themes, and others used their imagination as related to reading. Glitter, yarn, and bright colors were used to decorate the buttons. These buttons were attention getters, and students wore them proudly.

The writer observed the students during sustained reading time to get an overall picture of the reading behavior. Marks were recorded under observed behavior and tallied. It was observed that students were choosing books from the Accelerated Reader book list.

The writer selected Pippi Longstocking to read aloud to the students for twenty minutes. The writer used Pippi Longstocking to read aloud during the course of the practicum. Other books the writer read were Why Mosquitoes Buzz in Peoples' Ears, The Southern Folk Tales Big Book, The Magic Pebble, Mother's Day Poem, The Ride of

Paul Revere, The One Hundred Dresses, and different parts of classic fairy tale books as requested by the students.

Week 4

The writer continued reading aloud to the students. Sustained silent reading time was allowed to stimulate reading interest. The students who read the most during the sustained silent reading were given tokens to get extra points. Children used coupons to receive rewards. Older children went to kindergarten rooms to read to younger children.

Week 5

The writer scheduled a time with the language arts teacher to interview students on Friday. The students were interviewed briefly and individually to see if their attitudes had improved. The extrinsic motivation of earning points for prizes was obvious. However, half of them told the writer they were enjoying the books that were being read.

The writer also set up a time in the afternoon to review students' logs. The writer consulted with the language arts teacher and media specialist to get their input on whether or not they felt the students were reading more. The language arts teacher and media specialist reported they felt the students were reading more. It was very rainy during April, and many of the

students used recess time to read when the weather was inclement and they could not go outside.

Students continued to engage in silent sustained reading time. The writer monitored reading at least four times per week.

Students' interests were polled, and book talks were planned around them; for example, Freaky Friday, Boxcar Children, Choose Your Adventure.

Students were told in advance about the collage assignment. Some brought magazines from home. The writer collected old periodicals from a local library and carried them to school. The collage activities lasted a week. Students were allowed to work on collages before and after school was dismissed while waiting on the buses.

Week 6

Students continued to read individually and to younger children. The writer continued to monitor the students' reading. The students used coupons to purchase prizes.

Week 7

Besides the usual reading, earning points and receiving rewards, students engaged in a poster contest. The purpose of the contest was to encourage reading. The writer arranged with three school personnel from other schools to judge the posters. A grand prize, second place

and third place ribbons were given. Books were given for the grand prize.

Week 8

Students continued to follow the reading routine and received prizes. A show and tell was the spotlight for activities. Each student brought an object to school to represent their favorite book. Time was allowed during language arts for this activity. The writer also participated by showing a picture of the children and saying, "My favorite book is The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, and my children remind me of the children in the story." This opened a lively discussion, and students actively participated.

Week 9

Previous reading activities continued taking place. "Ramona", a VCR tape, was shown. The "Ramona" collection of stories was taken into the classroom. Many children read books from this collection.

Week 10

Students continued to read, take the Accelerated Reader tests, earn points, get coupons, and receive prizes. The writer took special craft and activity books to class to help students get ideas for the second reading buttons. Students used some of the ideas and combined them with creative ideas of their own. The reading

buttons were shared with the younger children. The writer continued to work with the language arts teacher to coordinate reading activities.

Week 11

Students continued reading activities. The writer collected and brought to class several rap songs appropriate for the age group and the school setting. The students under the supervision of the writer made up rap songs about reading and presented them in class.

Instead of filming the children telling stories, they were filmed doing their rap songs. The change in plan came about as a result of their request. They expressed that it would be more fun to do rap songs. The writer brought a VCR and tape to class to show the rap. The VCR did not work the first time, and the TV did not work the second time; the third time the tape was misplaced and presumed lost or filmed over.

Week 12

The lost VCR tape was found and shown to the students. They were ecstatic and begged to see it over. The tape was reshown the next day. The junior author books assignment did not materialize as time did not permit. Students continued to read for points, and received grand prizes.

The language arts teacher was interviewed to determine if students had made academic gains in testing

related to content, subject matter, or anything requiring extensive reading.

The writer administered a post questionnaire test to survey students' attitudes toward reading to the students. The writer also administered a post questionnaire test on TV viewing.

The writer served drinks, cookies, potato chips, and candy for the grand finale. Students participated in a reflection period. During this time, they shared feelings, expressed ideas, shared reading experiences and were very candid about the reading project. The consensus of the group was it was a lot of fun and they enjoyed competing with classmates to earn points and get prizes.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Some fifth grade students were unmotivated and disinterested in reading. Solution strategies involved encouraging parents, teachers and media specialists to provide interesting reading materials for children. Also, parents, older siblings, teachers, media specialists, etc. were encouraged to model a love for reading and read aloud to children.

The Accelerated Reader Program was introduced to the students, and they were given a chance to use it.

The results were:

1. Ten children out of 17 will keep a daily log of their reading activities recording the time spent reading and the number of pages read.

The results were ten children kept an accurate daily log. They recorded the date, title of material, pages read, and time spent reading. Five other children kept logs. However, they were very inconsistent with recording information; the number of pages read and time spent

reading were not recorded. The exact time of the reading material was not recorded.

The expectations were met. (See Appendix K)

2. Ten children out of 17 will reduce commercial television viewing time to one half the time spent before engaging in the reading.

Four students responded on the survey to indicate commercial TV time had decreased to one half the time spent before engaging in this reading project. Eleven students surveyed did not show a significant decrease in TV viewing time. Two students dropped out of the project. (See Appendix K)

3. Ten children out of 17 will set reading goals and adhere to them.

Twelve students out of 17 set reading goals and did adhere to them. (See Appendix K)

4. Ten children out of 17 will indicate that they checked out books from the media center and read for pleasure.

Fourteen students out of 17 reported on a check out log that they checked out books from the media center and read for pleasure. (See Appendix K)

5. A survey will indicate that ten children out of 17 use the media center at least twice a week to check out books for pleasure reading.

Ten students out of 17 used the media center at least twice a week to check out books for pleasure. (See Appendix K)

6. Ten students out of 17 will respond positively when asked if they ever see their parents read or if they like to be read to by their parents or teachers.

Ten students responded positively that they do see their parents read, and they like to be read to by their parents or teachers. (See Appendix K)

7. Ten students out of 17 will exhibit good behavior while engaging in sustained silent reading for 20 minutes per day.

Fourteen students were recorded on the sustained silent reading observation survey as exhibiting very good behavior during 20 minutes of sustained silent reading. These 14 students selected reading materials immediately and began reading. During sustained silent reading, behavior problems such as tapping, squirming, or taking objects out to play was not observed. The students were eager to use this time to read Accelerated Reader books so they could take the test to earn points. This activity exceeded the expected outcome. (See Appendix K)

8. Seven students out of seventeen will rate reading as at least the second favorite thing to do in spare time.

Two students rated reading as at least the second favorite thing to do in spare time. The other 13 students continued to rate TV viewing as the most favorite activity to do. Talking with friends on the telephone kept second place. The other activities changed positions in some instances. (See Appendix K)

9. The language arts teacher will report nine students out of 17 earned at least a B on a test that required content or extensive reading.

The language arts teacher reported 15 students earned at least a B on two out of five tests requiring content or extensive reading. The teacher reports the students seemed to have improved in their test taking strategies. They spent more time reading for understanding. (See Appendix K)

10. Ten students out of 17 will complete a reading survey with eight out of ten positive responses.

Ten students out of 17 completed a post questionnaire with eight out of ten positive responses. The expected outcome was reached. The one negative response received from all the students was that they chose to watch TV rather than read a book. (See Appendix K)

Discussion

Consideration as to why five students did not meet expectations might be that when students were absent, they did not record reading that might have occurred at home.

A daily log might have been unrealistic for all the group. A weekly log might have gleaned more results.

The writer demonstrated confident and realistic expectancy for the students when the task assignment of keeping a daily log was made. The students were given an opportunity to buy into the plan. Wlodkowski (1984) points out we should refrain from telling a student that something is easy or simple. Whenever we tell a student that something is easy or simple, we have placed that student "in a lose-lose" dilemma. If the task is completed, there is no reward because the task was easy in the first place. If the task is not completed, the feeling of despair is only heightened because the task was implied to be simple. The students who completed the daily log appeared to be elated to claim ownership in a task well done (p. 50).

The language arts teacher reported that four students commented periodically that they were going to read a book instead of watching TV so they could win incentive points to get prizes and special privileges.

Students spent more time reading, but they gave up other activities instead of TV. Old habits are hard to break. Canfield (1987) points out change is a slow and gradual process. Change does not occur overnight. To change old habits would take changing life styles or ways of life. Our nation is a nation of TV watchers. To many

households, the TV is the baby sitter, entertainer, and companion. A decline in TV watching would require re-educating the public, parents, and students. Hopefully, projects such as this one will reach enough students, teachers, administrators, and parents to eventually make a difference.

The reading goals were discussed with the students. They were advised to set reasonable goals which they felt would be obtainable.

The success for this activity could be attributable to the competitive spirit of the students. It became a contest with the students as each one wanted to out read the other.

It helped for the students to discuss with the writer how they planned to meet the reading goals. During the discussion, guidelines were established.

The writer patterned the procedure to assist students to get involved after Wlodkowski (1984). He points out a contract which is a short form of goal setting may serve as an agreement between the student and the teacher that specifies the exact ways to achieve and demonstrate a goal. The reading goal agreement detailed what was to be done and how it was to be accomplished. This plan helped to alleviate the chance of ambiguity that leads to student anxiety, frustration, and fear of failure.

Every time a book was checked out the student would log in with a straight mark under the appropriate column showing the reason for checking the book out.

The desire to read in order to earn enough points to pick out incentive prizes from the Accelerated Reader store seemed to be a motivating force for the students.

Students appeared to have an inner drive or desire to read once they became actively involved with the Accelerated Reader Program. The writer does not take complete credit for this change in attitude. Wlodkowski (1984) stresses that teachers do not motivate students; no one motivates anyone. However, teachers can make things attractive and stimulating. One may provide opportunities and incentives to encourage students. It is important to realize that teachers can match students' interest with learning activities. It is up to students to take command of their own ship and realize just as they are responsible for their own feelings, they are responsible for their own motivation. The writer concentrated on helping students to concentrate on values hoping their perception of reading would improve.

Students reported they got permission to go to the media center before class began or immediately after class was dismissed. The language arts teacher and media specialist agreed to cooperate together to build flexible time into the schedule so students would have

opportunities to use the media center other than regular scheduled classes. The students were eager to check out books so they could take the Accelerated Reader test and earn points to purchase prizes.

The media center is a very special place. Students may travel to places nearby or far away through its materials. Its purpose is to provide students with materials and services necessary for their growth and development.

The South Carolina Administrator's Guide to the Media Center (1984) points out all elementary school media centers should be open and available to services 30 minutes before school opens and 30 minutes after the close of the school day. The school media center should also be accessible to the students during the school day.

An additional two students responded that they read to the parents. The expected outcome was reached. Seven students reported the parents read a newspaper or magazine. Parents were consulted. Most of them reported they were putting forth effort to read to their children and let their children read so they could earn Accelerated Reader points. The parents seemed excited about helping their children in a contest. Whatever the reason, there was a lot of interest and excitement among the teachers, parents, and students.

Parents are the children's best teacher. The first encounter children have with the written word will have a great influence on later abilities and attitudes. Fisher (1987) declares as a parent, it is important to appreciate the reading stages of a child and not try to push him or her ahead. Reading is a process, and children need to follow the process in their own unique way. Reading to a parent involves a lot of trust which will only come if the child feels comfortable. Story time for the child and parent should be one of love and acceptance.

The writer and language arts teacher realized these students were at risk, had low self concepts, and felt uncomfortable in the reading setting and environment because of their own feeling of inadequacy.

The writer used counseling skills to help the students focus on life long goals and aspirations. Warner and Craycraft (1990) point out at-risk children are perceived as children who are doomed to failure before they start and with whom regular classroom techniques seem to make little difference. Good reading skills are ingredients to getting a good education. A good education is the key to helping solve problems faced by the at-risk child.

Over a period of time, students tend to focus on the task at hand as it was established. Sustained silent reading time would be a daily activity.

It is apparent that habits are hard to break. Students have engaged in TV watching for so long that it has become a way of life.

Wlodkowski (1984) explains intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In extrinsic motivation, the goal--not the "doing"--of the behavior is considered to be the reason for the performance of the behavior. Intrinsic motivation refers to the pleasure or value associated with an activity itself.

Extrinsic motivation was employed in this project at first. The students learned skills and performed well on reading tasks in order to get a reward, a higher grade, recognition, and praise from the teacher. The writer feels safe to say intrinsic motivation was reflected in the students' performance. Students read more for the enjoyment and the pleasure of the activity.

It was indicated that more reading was done. However, students used their time wisely during sustained reading time at school or during classroom time after an assignment was completed and they were given browsing time.

When reading was rated on a scale and not compared to another activity, it rated a number 2 on a scale of 1-5. The writer formulated the opinion that students have positive feelings about reading even though there are so

many other distractions they would rather do; for example, play a game, draw, eat, or chat with friends.

Canfield and Wells (1987) caution that it is not easy to change. It is also highlighted that this is not written to discourage one, but simply to caution one not to expect sudden and dramatic changes in the way a child feels or acts. Ideally students should have a positive self concept and want to effect change. The self concept as well as the determination to make needed change builds the same way muscles do, slowly and often, at first, imperceptibly.

Recommendations

1. The writer's recommendations to benefit others would be to research and glean information about the child's social and cultural background (from cumulative records, teachers, parents, etc.), set reading guidelines based on the child's interests and abilities. The writer will continue to encourage children to READ! READ! READ!
2. The writer will work with students to set reading goals that are attainable and let them know she has high expectations.

Disseminating Plans

The writer disseminated the practicum results among professional colleagues in two ways.

1. The first target group was the school faculty during an inservice. Teachers were delighted with the program and plan to incorporate the Accelerated Reader Program into their language arts program.
2. The second target group were other school district media specialists. During a sharing and exchanging of ideas session, they shared the fact that other reading incentive programs had been experimented with but no program of this magnitude. They plan to use this practicum as a model.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT DAILY LOG

STUDENT DAILY LOG

NAME _____

HOMEROOM TEACHER _____

[illegible]

Parent's Signature

Teacher's Signature _____

APPENDIX B
STUDENT TV AND READING SURVEY

STUDENT TV SURVEY

PRE

Name _____

Teacher _____

	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Do you choose to read a book during free time at home?			
2. Do you choose to read a book during free time at school			
3. Do you watch TV after school?			
4. Do you watch TV before school?			
5. Do your parents assist you in selecting TV programs?			
6. Do you watch TV while doing homework?			
7. Do you watch TV as long as you want?			
8. Do you plan your TV watching time?			

Circle the best choice in the following questions.

9. How much time did you spend watching TV yesterday?
 a. 1 hour b. 2 hours c. 3 hours
 d. 4 or more hours e. 0 hours f. other _____
10. How much time would you like to spend watching TV if you were allowed?
 a. 1 hour b. 2 hours c. 3 hours
 d. 4 or more hours e. 0 hours f. other _____

APPENDIX C
MY READING GOAL

MY READING GOAL

NAME _____

GRADE _____

DATE _____

My reading goal is...

Discuss how you plan to meet your reading goal.

TO BE COMPLETED AFTER THE DATES INDICATED.

Did you meet your goal? _____

Discuss the reason why or why not. _____

APPENDIX D
STUDENT'S CHECKOUT LOG

STUDENT'S CHECKOUT LOG

DATE _____

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

DIRECTIONS; EACH TIME A BOOK IS CHECKED OUT
MAKE A MARK TO INDICATE THE REASON.

	To complete an assignment	To do leisure reading	To use how-to books. Ex.: How to make a basket
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

APPENDIX E
FLEXIBLE CHECKOUT SCHEDULE
SURVEY

FLEXIBLE CHECKOUT SCHEDULE
SURVEY

PLEASE RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY AS IT RELATES TO YOU AND
CIRCLE THE LETTER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR USE OF THE
FLEXIBLE CHECKOUT SCHEDULE.

I utilize the flexible checkout schedule...

- a. In the morning before school begins to check out books
for pleasure reading.

In the afternoon after school to check out books for
pleasure reading.

- c. Never used the flexible checkout schedule.*

*If you have never used the flexible checkout schedule,
please explain why.

APPENDIX F
STUDENT'S INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDENT'S INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever see your parents read?
Please explain your response.

2. Do you like to be read to by your parents or teachers?
Please explain why or why not.

APPENDIX G
SUSTAINED SILENT READING OBSERVATION SURVEY

SUSTAINED SILENT READING OBSERVATION SURVEY

Scale + Indicates Positive Behavior
 - Indicates Negative Behavior

Student	Selected Reading Materials Immediately	Began Reading Immediately	Exhibited Behavior Problems
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

APPENDIX H
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
ACTIVITIES ENJOY DOING

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
ACTIVITIES ENJOY DOING

17 students participated with the questionnaire.

DIRECTIONS: FROM A SCALE OF 1-8 RATE THE ACTIVITY YOU
MOST ENJOY DOING.

8 - Activity least enjoy doing

7

6

5

4

3

2

1 - Activity most enjoy doing

ACTIVITY	RATING
Watch TV	_____
Read books for pleasure	_____
Talk with friends on the telephone	_____
Play sports	_____
Listen to music	_____
Play Nintendo	_____
Walk in the woods	_____
Go to the mall	_____

APPENDIX I
LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER'S INTERVIEW
QUESTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER'S INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please discuss your students' performance on objective tests.
2. Please discuss your students' performance on subject matter tests and tests requiring content reading.

Please record your responses below.

Test Performance Objective Test			Test Performance Subject Matter and Content Test Requiring Extensive Reading		
Good	Fair	Poor	Good	Fair	Poor

APPENDIX J
SURVEY
POST QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT TV SURVEY

POST

Name _____

Teacher _____

	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Do you choose to read a book during free time at home?			
2. Do you choose to read a book during free time at school?			
3. Do you watch TV after school?			
4. Do you watch TV before school?			
5. Do your parents assist you in selecting TV programs?			
6. Do you watch TV while doing homework?			
7. Do you watch TV as long as you want?			
8. Do you plan your TV watching time?			

Circle the best choice in the following questions.

9. How much time did you spend watching TV yesterday?
 a. 1 hour b. 2 hours c. 3 hours
 d. 4 or more hours e. 0 hours f. other _____
10. How much time would you like to spend watching TV if you were allowed?
 a. 1 hour b. 2 hours c. 3 hours
 d. 4 or more hours e. 0 hours f. other _____

APPENDIX K
RESULTS OF OUTCOME SUMMARY CHART

RESULTS OF OUTCOME SUMMARY CHART

1. Outcome -- Daily Log				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Students Kept An Accurate Log	Students Kept Incomplete Log	Total
17	2	10	5	17
This outcome was met.				

2. Outcome -- TV Viewing Time					
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Projected Decreased	Decreased TV Time	Failed to Reach Projected Decrease	Total
17	2	10	4	13	17
This outcome was not met.					

3. Outcome -- Reading Goals				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Adhered to Reading Goals	Did Not Adhere to Reading Goals	Total
17	2	12	3	17
This outcome exceeded expectations.				

4. Outcome -- Media Center Checkout Log				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Students Checked Out Books	No Report of Checkout Log	Total
17	2	14	1	17
This outcome exceeded expectations.				

5. Outcome -- Flexible Checkout Schedule				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Students Checked Out Books For Pleasure Reading	Students Not Using Flexible Checkout Schedule	Total
17	2	10	5	17
This outcome was met.				

6. Outcome -- Student Interview Questions				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Reported Seeing Parents Read or Like To Be Read To	Negative Reading Report	Total
17	2	10	5	17
This outcome was met.				

7. Outcome -- Sustained Silent Reading Observation				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Exhibited Positive Behavior	Improvement Needed	Total
17	2	14	1	17
This outcome exceeded expectations.				

8. Outcome -- Student Questionnaire Activities Enjoy Doing				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Rated Reading At Least Second Favorite Thing To Do in Spare Time	Rated Reading Below Second Favorite Thing To Do in Spare Time	Total
17	2	4	11	17
This outcome did not meet expectations.				

9. Outcome -- Language Arts Teacher's Report				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Earned "B" On At Least 2 out of 5 Tests	Earned Less Than A "B" on 2 out of 5 Tests	Total
17	2	15	0	17
This outcome exceeded expectations.				

10. Outcome -- Reading Survey				
Students in Project	Students Dropped	Students Completing Reading Survey With 8 out of 10 Positive Responses	Students Recording Less Than 8 out of 10 Positive Responses	Total
17	2	10	5	17
This outcome met expectations.				

APPENDIX L
ACCELERATED READER INCENTIVES AND POINTS

ACCELERATED READER INCENTIVES AND POINTS

1 Point

Bookmark
Piece of candy

5 points

Stickers
Pencils
Erasers
Bookcovers
Candy bar
Award ribbon
Button or badge

10 Points

Folder
Hi-lighter
Dime
Can of soda
Poster

15 Points

Homework pass
Fast food coupon

25 Points

2 Paperback books
T-shirt

50 Points

Pick a theme for a
day in school
Easter egg hunt
Special school
privileges

75 Points

Ice cream party
Make a school video